THE SINGER
AND OTHER PLAYS
BY PADRAIC PEARSE

MAUNSEL AND COMPANY, LTD.
DUBLIN AND LONDON 1918

Printed by George Roberts, Dublin
Irish Paper

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THE SINGER

The wide, clean kitchen of a country house. To the left a door, which when open, shows a wild country with a background of lonely hills; to the right a fireplace, beside which another door leads to a room. A candle burns on the table.

Maire ni Fhiannachta, a sad, grey-haired woman, is spinning wool near the fire. Sighle, a young girl, crouches in the ingle nook, carding. She is bare-footed.

MAIRE. Mend the fire, Sighle, jewel.

SIGHLE. Are you cold?

MAIRE. The feet of me are cold.

Sighle rises and mends the fire, putting on more turf; then she sits down again and resumes her carding.

SIGHLE. You had a right to go to bed.

MAIRE. I couldn't have slept, child. I had a feeling that something was drawing near to us. That something or somebody was coming here. All day yesterday I heard footsteps abroad on the street.

SIGHLE. 'Twas the dry leaves. The quicken trees in the gap were losing their leaves in the high wind.

MAIRE. Maybe so. Did you think that Colm looked anxious in himself last night when he was going out?

SIGHLE. I may as well quench that candle. The dawn has whitened.

She rises and quenches the candle; then resumes her place.

MAIRE. Did you think, daughter, that Colm looked anxious and sorrowful in himself when he was going out?

SIGHLE. I did.

MAIRE. Was he saying anything to you?

SIGHLE. He was. (*They work silently for a few minutes; then Sighle stops and speaks.*) Maire ni Fhiannachta, I think I ought to tell you what your son said to me. I have been going over and over it in my mind all the long hours of the night. It is not right for the two of us to be sitting at this fire with a secret like that coming between us. Will I tell you what Colm said to me?

MAIRE. You may tell me if you like, Sighle girl.

SIGHLE. He said to me that he was very fond of me.

MAIRE (*who has stopped spinning*). Yes, daughter?

SIGHLE. And . . . and he asked me if he came safe out of the trouble, would I marry him.

MAIRE. What did you say to him?

SIGHLE. I told him that I could not give him any answer.

MAIRE. Did he ask you why you could not give him an answer?

SIGHLE. He did; and I didn't know what to tell him.

MAIRE. Can you tell me?

SIGHLE. Do you remember the day I first came to your house, Maire?

MAIRE. I do well.

SIGHLE. Do you remember how lonely I was?

MAIRE. I do, you creature. Didn't I cry myself when the priest brought you in to me? And you caught hold of my skirt and wouldn't let it go, but cried till I thought your heart would break. "They've put my mammie in the ground," you kept saying. "She was asleep, and they put her in the ground."

SIGHLE. And you went down on your knees beside me and put your two arms around me, and put your cheek against my cheek and said nothing but "God comfort you; God comfort you." And when I stopped crying a little, you brought me over to the fire. Your two sons were at the fire, Maire. Colm was in the ingle where I am now; MacDara was sitting where you are. MacDara stooped down and lifted me on to his knee—I was only a weeshy child. He stroked my hair. Then he began singing a little song to me, a little song that had sad words in it, but that had joy in the heart of it, and in the beat of it; and the words and the music grew very caressing and soothing like, . . . like my mother's hand when it was on my cheek, or my mother's kiss on my mouth when I'd be half asleep —

MAIRE. Yes, daughter?

SIGHLE. And it soothed me, and soothed me; and I began to think that I was at home again, and I fell asleep in MacDara's arms —oh, the strong, strong arms of him, with his soft voice soothing me—when I woke up long after that I was still in his arms

with my head on his shoulder. I opened my eyes and looked up at him. He smiled at me and said, "That was a good, long sleep." I . . . put up my face to him to be kissed, and he bent down his head and kissed me. He was so gentle, so gentle. (*Maire cries silently.*) I had no right to tell you all this. God forgive me for bringing those tears to you, Maire ni Fhiannachta.

MAIRE. Whist, girl. You had a right to tell me. Go on, jewel . . . my boy, my poor boy !

SIGHLE. I was only a weeshy child —

MAIRE. Eight years you were, no more, the day the priest brought you into the house.

SIGHLE. How old was MacDara ?

MAIRE. He was turned fifteen. Fifteen he was on St. MacDara's day, the year your mother died.

SIGHLE. This house was as dear to me nearly as my mother's house from that day. You were good to me, Maire ni Fhiannachta, and your two boys were good to me, but—

MAIRE. Yes, daughter ?

SIGHLE. MacDara was like sun and moon to me, like dew and rain to me, like strength

and sweetness to me. I don't know did he know I was so fond of him. I think he did, because —

MAIRE. He did know, child.

SIGHLE. How do you know that he knew? Did he tell you? Did *you* know?

MAIRE. I am his mother. Don't I know every fibre of his body? Don't I know every thought of his mind? He never told me; but well I knew.

SIGHLE. He put me into his songs. That is what made me think he knew. My name was in many a song that he made. Often when I was at the *fosaidheacht* he would come up into the green *mám* to me, with a little song that he had made. It was happy for us in the green *mám* that time.

MAIRE. It was happy for us all when MacDara was here.

SIGHLE. The heart in the breast of me nearly broke when they banished him from us.

MAIRE. I knew it well.

SIGHLE. I used to lie awake in the night with his songs going through my brain, and the music of his voice. I used to call his name up in the green *mám*. At Mass his

face used to come between me and the white Host.

MAIRE. We have both been lonely for him. The house has been lonely for him.

SIGHLE. Colm never knew I was so fond of MacDara. When MacDara went away Colm was kinder to me than ever,—but, indeed, he was always kind.

MAIRE. Colm is a kind boy.

SIGHLE. It was not till yesterday he told me he was fond of me; I never thought it, I liked him well, but I never thought there would be word of marriage between us. I don't think he would have spoken if it was not for the trouble coming. He says it will be soon now.

MAIRE. It will be very soon.

SIGHLE. I shiver when I think of them all going out to fight. They will go out laughing: I see them with their cheeks flushed and their red lips apart. And then they will lie very still on the hillside,—so still and white, with no red in their cheeks, but maybe a red wound in their white breasts, or on their white foreheads. Colm's hair will be dabbled with blood.

MAIRE. Whist, daughter. That is no

talk for one that was reared in this house. I am his mother, and I do not grudge him.

SIGHLE. Forgive me, you have known more sorrow than I, and I think only of my own sorrow. (*She rises and kisses Maire.*) I am proud other times to think of so many young men, young men with straight, strong limbs, and smooth, white flesh, going out into great peril because a voice has called to them to right the wrong of the people. Oh, I would like to see the man that has set their hearts on fire with the breath of his voice! They say that he is very young. They say that he is one of ourselves,—a mountainy man that speaks our speech, and has known hunger and sorrow.

MAIRE. The strength and the sweetness he has come, maybe, out of his sorrow.

SIGHLE. I heard Diarmaid of the Bridge say that he was at the fair of Uachtar Ard yesterday. There were hundreds in the streets striving to see him.

MAIRE. I wonder would he be coming here into Cois-Fhairrge, or is it into the Joyce country he would go? I don't know but it's his coming I felt all day yesterday,

and all night. I thought, maybe, it might be —

SIGHLE. Who did you think it might be?

MAIRE. I thought it might be my son was coming to me.

SIGHLE. Is it MacDara?

MAIRE. Yes, MacDara.

SIGHLE. Do you think would he come back to be with the boys in the trouble?

MAIRE. He would.

SIGHLE. Would he be left back now?

MAIRE. Who would let or stay him and he homing like a homing bird? Death only; God between us and harm!

SIGHLE. Amen.

MAIRE. There is Colm in to us.

SIGHLE (*looking out of the window*). Aye, he's on the street.

MAIRE. Poor Colm!

The door opens and Colm comes in. He is a lad of twenty.

COLM. Did you not go to bed, mother?

MAIRE. I did not, Colm. I was too uneasy to sleep. Sighle kept me company all night.

COLM. It's a pity of the two of you to be up like this.

MAIRE. We would be more lonesome in bed than here chatting. Had you many boys at the drill to-night?

COLM. We had, then. There were ten and three score.

MAIRE. When will the trouble be, Colm?

COLM. It will be to-morrow, or after to-morrow; or maybe sooner. There's a man expected from Galway with the word.

MAIRE. Is it the mountains you'll take to, or to march to Uachtar Ard or to Galway?

COLM. It's to march we'll do, I'm thinking. Diarmaid of the Bridge and Cuimin Eanna and the master will be into us shortly. We have some plans to make and the master wants to write some orders.

MAIRE. Is it you will be their captain?

COLM. It is, unless a better man comes in my place.

MAIRE. What better man would come?

COLM. There is talk of the Singer coming. He was at the fair of Uachtar Ard yesterday.

MAIRE. Let you put on the kettle, Sighle, and ready the room. The master will be asking a cup of tea. Will you lie down for an hour, Colm?

COLM. I will not. They will be in on us now.

MAIRE. Let you make haste, Sighle. Ready the room. Here, give me the kettle.

Sighle, who has brought a kettle full of water, gives it to Maire, who hangs it over the fire; Sighle goes into the room.

COLM (*after a pause*). Was Sighle talking to you, mother?

MAIRE. She was, son.

COLM. What did she say?

MAIRE. She told me what you said to her last night. You must be patient, Colm. Don't press her to give you an answer too soon. She has strange thoughts in her heart, and strange memories.

COLM. What memories has she?

MAIRE. Many a woman has memories.

COLM. Sighle has no memories but of this house and of her mother. What is she but a child?

MAIRE. And what are you but a child? Can't you have patience? Children have memories, but the memories sometimes die. Sighle's memories have not died yet.

COLM. This is queer talk. What does she remember?

MAIRE. Whist, there's someone on the street.

COLM (*looking out of the window*). It's Cuimin and the master.

MAIRE. Be patient, son. Don't vex your head. What are you both but children yet?

The door opens and Cuimin Eanna and Maoilsheachlainn come in. Cuimin is middle aged; Maoilsheachlainn past middle age, turning grey, and a little stooped.

CUIMIN AND MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*entering*). God save all here.

MAIRE. God save you men. Will you sit? The kettle is on the boil. Give the master the big chair, Colm.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*sitting down near the fire on the chair which Colm places for him*). You're early stirring, Maire.

MAIRE. I didn't lie down at all, master.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Is it to sit up all night you did?

MAIRE. It is, then. Sighle kept me company.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. 'Tis a pity of the women of the world. Too good they are for us, and too full of care. I'm afraid that there was many a woman on this mountain that sat up last night. Aye, and many a woman in Ireland. 'Tis women that keep all the great vigils.

MAIRE (*wetting the tea*). Why wouldn't we sit up to have a cup of tea ready for you? Won't you go west into the room?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. We'd as lief drink it here beside the fire.

MAIRE. Sighle is readying the room. You'll want the table to write on, maybe.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. We'll go west so.

MAIRE. Wait till Sighle has the table laid. The tea will be drawn in a minute.

COLM (*to Maoilsheachlainn*). Was there any word of the messenger at the forge, master?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. There was not.

CUIMIN. When we were coming up the boreen I saw a man breasting Cnoc an Teachta that I thought might be him.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I don't think it was him. He was walking slowly, and sure the messenger that brings that great story will come on the wings of the wind.

Colm. Perhaps it was one of the boys you saw going home from the drill.

Cuimin. No, it was a stranger. He looked like a mountainy man that would be coming from a distance. He might be someone that was at the fair of Uachtar Ard yesterday, and that stayed the evening after selling.

Maoilsheachlainn. Aye, there did a lot stay, I'm told, talking about the word that's expected.

Cuimin. The Singer was there, I believe. Diarmaid of the Bridge said that he spoke to them all at the fair, and that there did a lot stay in the town after the fair thinking he'd speak to them again. They say he has the talk of an angel.

Maoilsheachlainn. What sort is he to look at?

Cuimin. A poor man of the mountains. Young they say he is, and pale like a man that lived in cities, but with the dress and the speech of a mountainy man; shy in himself and very silent, till he stands up to talk to the people. And then he has the voice of a silver trumpet, and words so beautiful that they make the people cry.

And there is terrible anger in him, for all that he is shrinking and gentle. Diarmaid said that in the Joyce country they think it is some great hero that has come back again to lead the people against the Gall, or maybe an angel, or the Son of Mary Himself that has come down on the earth.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*looking towards the door*). There's a footstep abroad.

MAIRE (*who has been sitting very straight in her chair listening intently*). That is my son's step.

COLM. Sure, amn't I here, mother?

MAIRE. That is MacDara's step.

All start and look first towards Maire, then towards the door, the latch of which has been touched.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I wish it was MacDara, Maire. 'Tis maybe Diarmaid or the mountainy man we saw on the road.

MAIRE. It is not Diarmaid. It is MacDara.

The door opens slowly and MacDara, a young man of perhaps twenty-five, dressed like a man of the mountains, stands on the threshold.

MACDARA. God save all here.

ALL. And you, likewise.

MAIRE (*who has risen and is stretching out her hands*). I felt you coming to me, little son!

MACDARA (*springing to her and folding her in his arms*). Little mother! little mother!

While they still embrace Sighle re-enters from the room and stands still on the threshold looking at MacDara.

MAIRE (*raising her head*). Along all the quiet roads and across all the rough mountains, and through all the crowded towns, I felt you drawing near to me.

MACDARA. Oh, the long years, the long years!

MAIRE. I am crying for pride at the sight of you. Neighbours, neighbours, this is MacDara, the first child that I bore to my husband.

MACDARA (*kissing Colm*). My little brother! (*To Cuimin*), Cuimin Eanna! (*To Maoilsheachlainn*), Master! (*They shake hands.*)

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Welcome home.

CUIMIN. Welcome home.

MacDara (*looking round*). Where is . . . (*He sees Sighle in the doorway.*) Sighle! (*He approaches her and takes her hand.*) Little, little Sighle! . . . I . . . . Mother, sometimes when I was in the middle of great crowds, I have seen this fireplace, and you standing with your hands stretched out to me as you stood a minute ago, and Sighle in the doorway of the room; and my heart has cried out to you.

Maire. I used to hear the crying of your heart. Often and often here by the fireside or abroad on the street I would stand and say, "MacDara is crying out to me now. The heart in him is yearning." And this while back I felt you draw near, draw near, step by step. Last night I felt you very near to me. Do you remember me saying, Sighle, that I felt someone coming, and that I thought maybe it might be MacDara?

Sighle. You did.

Maire. I knew that something glorious was coming to the mountain with to-day's dawn. Red dawns and white dawns I have seen on the hills, but none like this dawn. Come in, jewel, and sit down awhile in the

room. Sighle has the table laid. The tea is drawn. Bring in the griddle-cakes, Sighle. Come in, master. Come in, Cuimin.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. No, Maire, we'll sit here a while. You and the children will like to be by yourselves. Go in, west, children. Cuimin and I have plans to make. We're expecting Diarmaid of the Bridge in.

MAIRE. We don't grudge you a share in our joy, master. Nor you, Cuimin.

CUIMIN. No, go on in, Maire. We'll go west after you. We want to talk here.

MAIRE. Well, come in when you have your talk out. There's enough tea on the pot for everybody. In with you, children.

MacDara, Colm, Sighle and Maire go into the room, Sighle carrying the griddle-cakes and Maire the tea.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. This is great news, MacDara to be back.

CUIMIN. Do you think will he be with us?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Is it a boy with that gesture of the head, that proud, laughing

gesture, to be a coward or a stag? You don't know the heart of this boy, Cuimin; the love that's in it, and the strength. You don't know the mind he has, so gracious, so full of wisdom. I taught him when he was only a little ladeen. 'Tis a pity that he had ever to go away from us. And yet, I think, his exile has made him a better man. His soul must be full of great remembrances.

CUIMIN. I never knew rightly why he was banished.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Songs he was making that were setting the people's hearts on fire.

CUIMIN. Aye, I often heard his songs.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. They were full of terrible love for the people and of great anger against the Gall. Some said there was irreligion in them and blasphemy against God. But I never saw it, and I don't believe it. There are some would have us believe that God is on the side of the Gall. Well, word came down from Galway or from Dublin that he would be put in prison, and maybe excommunicated if he did not go away. He was only a gossoon of eighteen, or maybe twenty. The priest

counselled him to go, and not to bring sorrow on his mother's house. He went away one evening without taking farewell or leave of anyone.

CUIMIN. Where has he been since, I don't know?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. In great cities, I'd say, and in lonely places. He has the face of a scholar, or of a priest, or of a clerk, on him. He must have read a lot, and thought a lot, and made a lot of songs.

CUIMIN. I don't know is he as strong a boy as Colm.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. He's not as robust in himself as Colm is, but there was great strength in the grip of his hand. I'd say that he'd wield a camán or a pike with any boy on the mountain.

CUIMIN. He'll be a great backing to us if he is with us. The people love him on account of the songs he used to make. There's not a man that won't do his bidding.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. That's so. And his counsel will be useful to us. He'll make better plans than you or I, Cuimin.

CUIMIN. I wonder what's keeping Diarmaid.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Some news that was at the forge or at the priest's house, maybe. He went east the road to see if there was sign of a word from Galway.

CUIMIN. I'll be uneasy till he comes. (*He gets up and walks to the window and looks out; Maoilsheachlainn remains deep in thought by the fire. Cuimin returns from the window and continues.*) Is it to march we'll do, or to fight here in the hills?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Out Maam Gap we'll go and meet the boys from the Joyce country. We'll leave some to guard the Gap and some at Leenane. We'll march the road between the lakes, through Maam and Cornamona and Clonbur to Cong. Then we'll have friends on our left at Ballinrobe and on our right at Tuam. What is there to stop us but the few men the Gall have in Clifden?

CUIMIN. And if they march against us, we can destroy them from the mountains.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. We can. It's into a trap they'll walk.

MacDara appears in the doorway of the room with a cup of tea and some griddle-cake in his hand.

MacDara. I've brought you out a cup of tea, master. I thought it long you were sitting here.

Maoilsheachlainn (*taking it*). God bless you, MacDara.

MacDara. Go west, Cuimin. There's a place at the table for you now.

Cuimin (*rising and going in*). I may as well. Give me a call, boy, when Diarmaid comes.

Maoilsheachlainn. This is a great day, MacDara.

MacDara. It is a great day and a glad day, and yet it is a sorrowful day.

Maoilsheachlainn. How can the day of your home-coming be sorrowful?

MacDara. Has not every great joy a great sorrow at its core? Does not the joy of home-coming enclose the pain of departing? I have a strange feeling, master, I have only finished a long journey, and I feel as if I were about to take another long journey. I meant this to be a home-coming. but it seems only like a meeting on the way. . . . When my mother stood up to meet me with her arms stretched out to me, I thought of Mary meeting her Son on the Dolorous Way.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. That was a queer thought. What was it that drew you home?

MACDARA. Some secret thing that I have no name for. Some feeling that I must see my mother, and Colm, and Sighle, again. A feeling that I must face some great adventure with their kisses on my lips. I seemed to see myself brought to die before a great crowd that stood cold and silent; and there were some that cursed me in their hearts for having brought death into their houses. Sad dead faces seemed to reproach me. Oh, the wise, sad faces of the dead—and the keening of women rang in my ears. But I felt that the kisses of those three, warm on my mouth, would be as wine in my blood, strengthening me to bear what men said, and to die with only love and pity in my heart, and no bitterness.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. It was strange that you should see yourself like that.

MACDARA. It was foolish. One has strange, lonesome thoughts when one is in the middle of crowds. But I am glad of that thought, for it drove me home. I felt so lonely away from here. . . . My mother's hair is greyer than it was.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Aye, she has been ageing. She has had great sorrows: your father dead and you banished. Colm is grown a fine, strapping boy.

MACDARA. He is. There is some shyness between Colm and me. We have not spoken yet as we used to.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. When boys are brought up together and then parted for a long time there is often shyness between them when they meet again. . . . Do you find Sighle changed?

MACDARA. No; and, yet—yes. Master, she is very beautiful. I did not know a woman could be so beautiful. I thought that all beauty was in the heart, that beauty was a secret thing that could be seen only with the eyes of reverie, or in a dream of some unborn splendour. I had schooled myself to think physical beauty an unholy thing. I tried to keep my heart virginal; and sometimes in the street of a city when I have stopped to look at the white limbs of some beautiful child, and have felt the pain that the sight of great beauty brings, I have wished that I could blind my eyes so that I might shut out the sight of everything that

tempted me. At times I have rebelled against that, and have cried aloud that God would not have filled the world with beauty, even to the making drunk of the sight, if beauty were not of heaven. But, then, again, I have said, "This is the subtlest form of temptation; this is to give to one's own desire the sanction of God's will." And I have hardened my heart and kept myself cold and chaste as the top of a high mountain. But now I think I was wrong, for beauty like Sighle's must be holy.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Surely a good and comely girl is holy. You question yourself too much, MacDara. You brood too much. Do you remember when you were a gossoon, how you cried over the wild duck whose wing you broke by accident with a stone, and made a song about the crane whose nest you found ravished, and about the red robin you found perished on the doorstep? And how the priest laughed because you told him in confession that you had stolen drowned lilies from the river?

MACDARA (*laughing*). Aye, it was at a station in Diarmaid of the Bridge's, and when the priest laughed my face got red,

and everyone looked at us, and I got up and ran out of the house.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*laughing*). I remember it well. We thought it was what you told him you were in love with his housekeeper.

MACDARA. It's little but I was, too. She used to give me apples out of the priest's apple-garden. Little brown russet apples, the sweetest I ever tasted. I used to think that the apples of the Hesperides that the Children of Tuireann went to quest must have been like them.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. It's a wonder but you made a poem about them.

MACDARA. I did. I made a poem in Deibhidhe of twenty quatrains.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Did you make many songs while you were away?

MACDARA. When I went away first my heart was as if dead and dumb and I could not make any songs. After a little while, when I was going through the sweet, green country, and I used to come to little towns where I'd see children playing, my heart seemed to open again like hard ground that would be watered with rain. The first song

that I made was about the children that I saw playing in the street of Kilconnell. The next song that I made was about an old dark man that I met on the causeway of Aughrim. I made a glad, proud song when I saw the broad Shannon flow under the bridge of Athlone. I made many a song after that before I reached Dublin.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. How did it fare with you in Dublin?

MACDARA. I went to a bookseller and gave him the book of my songs to print. He said that he dared not print them; that the Gall would put him in prison and break up his printing-press. I was hungry and I wandered through the streets. Then a man who saw me read an Irish poster on the wall spoke to me and asked me where I came from. I told him my story. In a few days he came to me and said that he had found work for me to teach Irish and Latin and Greek in a school. I went to the school and taught in it for a year. I wrote a few poems and they were printed in a paper. One day the Brother who was over the school came to me and asked me was it I that had written those poems. I

said it was. He told me then that I could not teach in the school any longer. So I went away.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. What happened to you after that?

MACDARA. I wandered in the streets until I saw a notice that a teacher was wanted to teach a boy. I went to the house and a lady engaged me to teach her little son for ten shillings a week. Two years I spent at that. The boy was a winsome child, and he grew into my heart. I thought it a wonderful thing to have the moulding of a mind, of a life, in my hands. Do you ever think that, you who are a schoolmaster?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. It's not much time I get for thinking.

MACDARA. I have done nothing all my life but think: think and make poems.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. If the thoughts and the poems are good, that is a good life's work.

MACDARA. Aye, they say that to be busy with the things of the spirit is better than to be busy with the things of the body. But I am not sure, master. Can the Vision

Beautiful alone content a man? I think a true man is divine in this, that, like God, he must needs create, he must needs do.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Is not a poet a maker?

MACDARA. No, he is only a voice that cries out, a sigh that trembles into rest. The true teacher must suffer and do. He must break bread to the people: he must go into Gethsemane and toil up the steep of Golgotha. . . . Sometimes I think that to be a woman and to serve and suffer as women do is to be the highest thing. Perhaps that is why I felt it proud and wondrous to be a teacher, for a teacher does that. I gave to the little lad I taught the very flesh and blood and breath that were my life. I fed him on the milk of my kindness; I breathed into him my spirit.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Did he repay you for that great service?

MACDARA. Can any child repay its mother? Master, your trade is the most sorrowful of all trades. You are like a poor mother who spends herself in nursing children who go away and never come back to her.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Was your little pupil untrue to you?

MACDARA. Nay; he was so true to me that his mother grew jealous of me. A good mother and a good teacher are always jealous of each other. That is why a teacher's trade is the most sorrowful of all trades. If he is a bad teacher his pupil *wanders* away from him. If he is a good teacher his pupil's folk grow jealous of him. My little pupil's mother bade him choose between her and me.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Which did he choose?

MACDARA. He chose his mother. How could I blame him?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. What did you do?

MACDARA. I shouldered my bundle and took to the roads.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. How did it fare with you?

MACDARA. It fares ill with one who is so poor that he has no longer even his dreams. I was the poorest *shuiler* on the roads of Ireland, for I had no single illusion left to me. I could neither pray when I came to a holy well nor drink in a public-

house when I had got a little money. One seemed to me as foolish as the other.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Did you make no songs in those days?

MACDARA. I made one so bitter that when I recited it at a wake they thought I was some wandering, wicked spirit, and they put me out of the house.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Did you not pray at all?

MACDARA. Once, as I knelt by the cross of Kilgobbin, it became clear to me, with an awful clearness, that there was no God. Why pray after that? I burst into a fit of laughter at the folly of men in thinking that there is a God. I felt inclined to run through the villages and cry aloud, "People, it is all a mistake; there is no God."

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. MacDara, this grieves me.

MACDARA. Then I said, "why take away their illusion? If they find out that there is no God, their hearts will be as lonely as mine." So I walked the roads with my secret.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. MacDara, I am sorry for this. You must pray, you must pray.

You will find God again. He has only hidden His face from you.

MACDARA. No, He has revealed His Face to me. His Face is terrible and sweet, Maoilsheachlainn. I know It well now.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Then you found Him again?

MACDARA. His Name is suffering. His Name is loneliness. His Name is abjection.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I do not rightly understand you, and yet I think you are saying something that is true.

MACDARA. I have lived with the homeless and with the breadless. Oh, Maoilsheachlainn, the poor, the poor! I have seen such sad childings, such bare marriage feasts, such candleless wakes! In the pleasant country places I have seen them, but oftener in the dark, unquiet streets of the city. My heart has been heavy with the sorrow of mothers, my eyes have been wet with the tears of children. The people, Maoilsheachlainn, the dumb, suffering people: reviled and outcast, yet pure and splendid and faithful. In them I saw, or seemed to see again, the Face of God. Ah, it is a tear-stained face,

blood-stained, defiled with ordure, but it is the Holy Face!

. . . .

There is a page of MS. missing here, which evidently covered the exit to the room of MacDara and the entrance of Diarmaid.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. What news have you with you?

DIARMAID. The Gall have marched from Clifden.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Is it into the hills?

DIARMAID. By Letterfrack they have come, and the Pass of Kylemore, and through Glen Inagh.

COLM. And no word from Galway yet?

DIARMAID. No word, nor sign of a word.

COLM. They told us to wait for the word. We've waited too long.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. The messenger may have been caught. Perhaps the Gall are marching from Galway too.

COLM. We'd best strike ourselves, so.

CUIMIN. Is it to strike before the word is given?

Colm. Is it to die like rats you'd have us because the word is not given?

Cuimin. Our plans are not finished; our orders are not here.

Colm. Our plans will never be finished. Our orders may never be here.

Cuimin. We've no one to lead us.

Colm. Didn't you elect me your captain?

Cuimin. We did: but not to bid us rise out when the whole country is quiet. We were to get the word from the men that are over the people. They'll speak when the time comes.

Colm. They should have spoken before the Gall marched.

Cuimin. What call have you to say what they should or what they should not have done? Am I speaking lie or truth, men? Are we to rise out before the word comes? I say we must wait for the word. What do you say, Diarmaid, you that was our messenger to Galway?

Diarmaid. I like the way Colm has spoken, and we may live to say that he spoke wisely as well as bravely; but I'm slow to give my voice to send out the boys of this mountain—our poor little handful—

to stand with their poor pikes against the big guns of the Gall. If we had news that they were rising in the other countrysides; but we've got no news.

CUIMIN. What do you say, master? You're wiser than any of us.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I say to Colm that a greater one than he or I may give us the word before the day is old, Let you have patience, Colm —

COLM. My mother told me to have patience this morning, when MacDara's step was on the street. Patience, and I after waiting seven years before I spoke, and then to speak too late!

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. What are you saying at all?

COLM. I am saying this, master, that I'm going out the road to meet the Gall, if only five men of the mountain follow me.

Sighle has appeared in the doorway and stands terror-stricken.

CUIMIN. You will not, Colm.

COLM. I will.

DIARMAID. This is throwing away men's lives.

COLM. Men's lives get very precious to

them when they have bought out their land.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Listen to me, Colm —

Colm goes out angrily, and the others follow him, trying to restrain him. Sighle comes to the fire, where she kneels.

SIGHLE (*as in a reverie*). "They will go out laughing," I said, but Colm has gone out with anger in his heart. And he was so kind. . . . Love is a terrible thing. There is no pain so great as the pain of love. . . . I wish MacDara and I were children in the green *mám* and that we did not know that we loved each other. . . . Colm will lie dead on the road to Glen Inagh, and MacDara will go out to die. . . . There is nothing in the world but love and death.

MacDara comes out of the room.

MACDARA (*in a low voice*). She has dropped asleep, Sighle.

SIGHLE. She watched long, MacDara. We all watched long.

MACDARA. Every long watch ends. Every traveller comes home.

SIGHLE. Sometimes when people watch it is death that comes.

MACDARA. Could there be a royaller coming, Sighle? . . . Once I wanted life. You and I to be together in one place always: that is what I wanted. But now I see that we shall be together for a little time only; that I have to do a hard, sweet thing, and that I must do it alone. And because I love you I would not have it different. . . . I wanted to have your kiss on my lips, Sighle, as well as my mother's and Colm's. But I will deny myself that. (*Sighle is crying.*) Don't cry, child. Stay near my mother while she lives—it may be for a little while of years. You poor women suffer so much pain, so much sorrow, and yet you do not die until long after your strong, young sons and lovers have died.

Maire's voice is heard from the room, crying: MacDara!

MACDARA. She is calling me.

He goes into the room; Sighle cries on her knees by the fire. After a little while voices are heard outside, the latch is lifted, and Maoilsheachlainn comes in.

SIGHLE. Is he gone, master?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Gone out the road

with ten or fifteen of the young lads. Is MacDara within still?

SIGHLE. He was here in the kitchen a while. His mother called him and he went back to her.

Maoilsheachlainn goes over and sits down near the fire.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I think, maybe, that Colm did what was right. We are too old to be at the head of work like this. Was MacDara talking to you about the trouble?

SIGHLE. He said that he would have to do a hard, sweet thing, and that he would have to do it alone.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. I'm sorry but I called him before Colm went out.

A murmur is heard as of a crowd of men talking as they come up the hill.

SIGHLE. What is that noise like voices?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. It is the boys coming up the hillside. There was a great crowd gathering below at the cross.

The voices swell loud outside the door. Cuimin Eanna, Diarmaid, and some others come in.

DIARMAID. The men say we did wrong to let Colm go out with that little handful. They say we should all have marched.

CUIMIN. And I say Colm was wrong to go before he got his orders. Are we all to go out and get shot down because one man is hotheaded? Where is the plan that was to come from Galway?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Men, I'm blaming myself for not saying the thing I'm going to say before we let Colm go. We talk about getting word from Galway. What would you say, neighbours, if the man that will give the word is under the roof of this house.

CUIMIN. Who is it you mean?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*going to the door of the room and throwing it open*). Let you rise out, MacDara, and reveal yourself to the men that are waiting for your word.

ONE OF THE NEWCOMERS. Has MacDara come home?

MacDara comes out of the room: Maire ni Fhiannachta stands behind him in the doorway.

DIARMAID (*starting up from where he has been sitting*). That is the man that stood among the people in the fair of Uachtar Ard! (*He goes up to MacDara and kisses his hand.*)

I could not get near you yesterday, MacDara, with the crowds that were round you. What was on me that didn't know you? Sure, I had a right to know that sad, proud head. Maire ni Fhiannachta, men and women yet unborn will bless the pains of your first childing.

Maire ni Fhiannachta comes forward slowly and takes her son's hand and kisses it.

MAIRE (*in a low voice*). Soft hand that played at my breast, strong hand that will fall heavy on the Gall, brave hand that will break the yoke! Men of this mountain, my son MacDara is the Singer that has quickened the dead years and all the quiet dust! Let the horsemen that sleep in Aileach rise up and follow him into the war! Weave your winding-sheets, women, for there will be many a noble corpse to be waked before the new moon!

Each comes forward and kisses his hand.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Let you speak, MacDara, and tell us is it time.

MACDARA. Where is Colm?

DIARMAID. Gone out the road to fight the Gall, himself and fifteen.

MacDara. Has not Colm spoken by his deed already?

Cuimin. You are our leader.

MacDara. Your leader is the man that spoke first. Give me a pike and I will follow Colm. Why did you let him go out with fifteen men only? You are fourscore on the mountain.

Diarmaid. We thought it a foolish thing for fourscore to go into battle against four thousand, or, maybe, forty thousand.

MacDara. And so it is a foolish thing. Do you want us to be wise?

Cuimin. This is strange talk.

MacDara. I will talk to you more strangely yet. It is for your own souls' sakes I would have had the fourscore go, and not for Colm's sake, or for the battle's sake, for the battle is won whether you go or not.

A cry is heard outside. One rushes in terror-stricken.

The Newcomer. Young Colm has fallen at the Glen foot.

MacDara. The fifteen were too many. Old men, you did not do your work well enough. You should have kept all back but

one. One man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world. I will take no pike, I will go into the battle with bare hands. I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on the tree!

He moves through them, pulling off his clothes as he goes. As he reaches the threshold a great shout goes up from the people. He passes out and the shout dies slowly away. The other men follow him slowly. Maire ni Fhiannachta sits down at the fire, where Sighle still crouches.

THE CURTAIN DESCENDS.

THE KING

A MORALITY

CHARACTERS

GIOLLA NA NAOMH (*"the Servant of the Saints"*), *a Little Boy*

BOYS

AN ABBOT

MONKS

A KING

HEROES

GILLIES

WOMEN

PLACE—An ancient monastery

THE KING

A green before the monastery. The voices of monks are heard chanting. Through the chanting breaks the sound of a trumpet. A little boy runs out from the monastery and stands on the green looking in the direction whence the trumpet has spoken.

THE BOY. Conall, Diarmaid, Giolla na Naomh!

The voices of other boys answer him.

FIRST BOY. There is a host marching from the North.

SECOND BOY. Where is it?

FIRST BOY. See it beneath you in the glen.

THIRD BOY. It is the King's host.

FOURTH BOY. The King is going to battle.

The trumpet speaks again, nearer. The boys go upon the rampart of the monastery. The murmur of a marching host is heard.

FIRST BOY. I see the horses and the riders.

SECOND BOY. I see the swords and the spears.

FOURTH BOY. I see the standards and the banners.

THIRD BOY. I see the King's banner.

FOURTH BOY. I see the King !

FIRST BOY. Which of them is the King ?

FOURTH BOY. The tall comely man on the black horse.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. Let us salute the King.

THE BOYS (*with the voice of one*). Take victory in battle and slaying, O King !

The voices af warriors are heard acclaiming the King as the host marches past with din of weapons and music of trumpet and pipes. Silence succeeds.

FIRST BOY. I would like to be a King.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. Why ?

FIRST BOY. The King has gold and silver.

SECOND BOY. He has noble jewels in his jewel-house.

THIRD BOY. He has slender steeds and gallant hounds.

Fourth Boy. He has a keen-edged, gold-hilted sword and a mighty-shafted, blue-headed spear and a glorious red-emblazoned shield. I saw him once in my father's house.

First Boy. What was he like?

Fourth Boy. He was tall and noble. He was strong and broad-shouldered. He had long fair hair. He had a comely proud face. He had two piercing grey eyes. A white vest of satin next his skin. A very beautiful red tunic, with a white hood, upon his body.. A royal mantle of purple about him. Seven colours upon him, between vest and tunic and hood and mantle. A silver brooch upon his breast. A kingly diadem upon his head, and the colour of gold upon it. Two great wings rising above his head, as white as the two wings of a sea-gull and as broad as the two wings of an eagle. He was a gallant man.

Second Boy. And what was the look of his face?

Third Boy. Did he look angry, stern?

Fourth Boy. He did, at times.

First Boy. Had he a laughing look?

Fourth Boy. He laughed only once.

SECOND BOY. How did he look mostly? Stern or laughing?

FOURTH BOY. He looked sorrowful. When he was talking to the kings and the heroes he had an angry and a laughing look every second while, but when he was silent he was sorrowful.

FIRST BOY. What sorrow can he have?

FOURTH BOY. I do not know. The thousands he has slain, perhaps.

SECOND BOY. The churches he has plundered.

THIRD BOY. The battles he has lost.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. Alas, the poor King!

SECOND BOY. You would not like to be a King, Giolla na Naomh?

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I would not. I would rather be a monk that I might pray for the King.

FOURTH BOY. I may have the kingship of this country when I am a man, for my father is of the royal blood.

SECOND BOY. And my father is of the royal blood, too.

THIRD BOY. Aye, and mine.

FOURTH BOY. I will not let the kingdom go with either of you. It is mine!

SECOND BOY. It is not, but mine

THIRD BOY. It matters not whose it is, for *I* will have it!

SECOND BOY. No, nor anyone of your house!

FOURTH BOY (*seizing a switch of sally and brandishing it*). I will ply the venom of my sword upon you! I will defend my kingdom against my enemies! Giolla na Naomh, pray for the King!

A bell sounds from the monastery.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. The bell is ringing.

The people of the monastery come upon the green in ones and twos, the Abbot last. The boys gather a little apart. Distant sounds of battle are heard.

THE ABBOT. My children, the King is giving battle to his foes.

FIRST MONK. This King has lost every battle into which he has gone up to this.

THE ABBOT. In a vision that I saw last night as I knelt before my God it was revealed to me that the battle will be broken on the King again.

SECOND MONK. My grief!

THIRD MONK. My grief!

First Monk. Tell us, Father, the cause of these unnumbered defeats.

The Abbot. Do you think that an offering will be accepted from polluted hands? This King has shed the blood of the innocent. He has made spoils and forays. He has oppressed the poor. He has forsaken the friendship of God and made friends with evil-doers.

First Monk. That is true. Yet it is a good fight that the King fights now, for he gives battle for his people.

The Abbot. It is an angel that should be sent to pour out the wine and to break the bread of this sacrifice. Not by an unholy King should the noble wine that is in the veins of good heroes be spilt; not at the behest of a guilty king should fair bodies be mangled. I say to you that the offering will not be accepted.

First Monk. And are all guilty of the sins of the King? If the King is defeated it's grief will be for all. Why must all suffer for the sins of the King? On the King the eric!

The Abbot. The nation is guilty of the sins of its princes. I say to you that this

nation shall not be freed until it chooses for itself a righteous King.

SECOND MONK. Where shall a righteous King be found?

THE ABBOT. I do not know, unless he be found among these little boys.

The boys have drawn near and are gathered about the Abbot.

FIRST MONK. And shall the people be in bondage until these little lads are fit for battle? It is not the King's case I pity, but the case of the people. I heard women mourning last night. Shall women be mourning in this land till doom?

THIRD MONK. As I went out from the monastery yesterday there was a dead man on the verge of the wood. Battle is terrible.

SECOND MONK. No, battle is glorious! While we were singing our None but now, Father, I heard, through the psalmody of the brethren, the voice of a trumpet. My heart leaped, and I would fain have risen from the place where I was and gone after that gallant music. I should not have cared though it were to my death I went.

THE ABBOT. That is the voice of a young man. The old wait for death, but the

young go to meet it. If into this quiet place, where monks chant and children play, there were to come from yonder battle-field a bloodstained man, calling upon all to follow him into the battle-press, there is none here that would not rise and follow him, but I myself and the old brother that rings our bell. There is none of you, young brothers, no, nor any of these little lads, that would not rise from me and go into the battle. That music of the fighters makes drunk the hearts of young men.

SECOND MONK. It is good for young men to be made drunk.

FIRST MONK. Brother, you speak wickedness.

THE ABBOT. There is a heady ale which all young men should drink, for he who has not been made drunk with it has not lived. It is with that ale that God makes drunk the hearts of the saints. I would not forbid you your intoxication, O young men!

FIRST MONK. This is not plain, Father.

THE ABBOT. Do you think if that terrible, beautiful voice for which young men strain their ears were to speak from yon place where the fighters are, and the horses, and

the music, that I would stay you, did ye rise to obey it? Do you think I would grudge any of you? Do you think I would grudge the dearest of these little boys, to death calling with that terrible, beautiful voice? I would let you all go, though I and the old brother should be very lonely here.

SECOND BOY. Giolla na Naomh would not go, Father.

THE ABBOT. Why do you say that?

SECOND BOY. He said that he would rather be a monk.

THE ABBOT. Would you not go into the battle, Giolla na Naomh?

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I would. I would go as a gilly to the King, that I might serve him when all would forsake him.

THE ABBOT. But it is to the saints you are gilly, Giolla na Naomh, and not to the King.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. It were not much for the poor King to have one little gilly that would not forsake him when the battle would be broken on him and all forsaking him.

THE ABBOT. This child is right. While we think of glory he thinks of service.

An outcry as of grief and dismay is heard from the battlefield.

FIRST MONK. I fear me that the King is beaten !

THE ABBOT. Go upon the rampart and tell us what you see.

FIRST MONK (*having gone upon the rampart*). A man comes towards us in flight.

SECOND MONK. What manner of man is he ?

FIRST MONK. A bloodstained man, all spent, his feet staggering and stumbling under him.

SECOND MONK. Is he a man of the King's people ?

FIRST MONK. He is.

A soldier comes upon the green all spent.

THE SOLDIER. The King is beaten !

THE MONKS. My sorrow, my sorrow !

THE SOLDIER. The King is beaten, I say to you ! O ye of the books and the bells, small was your help to us in the hard battle ! The King is beaten !

THE ABBOT. Where is the King ?

THE SOLDIER. He is flying.

THE ABBOT. Give us the description of the battle.

THE SOLDIER. I cannot speak. Let a drink be given to me.

The Abbot. Let a drink be given to this man.

The little boy who is called Giolla na Naomh gives him a drink of water.

The Abbot. Speak to us now and give us the description of the battle.

The Soldier. Each man of us was a fighter of ten. The King was a fighter of a hundred. But what availed us our valour? We were beaten and we fled. Hundreds lie sole to sole on the lea.

The Monks. My sorrow! My sorrow!

A din grows.

Second Monk. Who comes?

First Monk. The King!

Riders and gillies come upon the green pell-mell, the King in their midst. The King goes upon his knees before the Abbot, and throws his sword upon the ground.

The King. Give me your curse, O man of God, and let me go to my death! I am beaten. My people are beaten. Ten battles have I fought against my foes, and every battle of them has been broken on me. It is I who have brought God's wrath upon this land. Ask your God not to wreak his

anger on my people henceforth, but to wreak it on me. Have pity on my people, O man of God!

THE ABBOT. God will have pity on them.

THE KING. God has forsaken me.

THE ABBOT. You have forsaken God.

THE KING. God has forsaken my people.

THE ABBOT. He has not, neither will He. He will save this nation if it choose a righteous King.

THE KING. Give it then a righteous King. Give it one of your monks or one of these little lads to be its King. The battle on your protection, O man of God!

THE ABBOT. Not so, but on the protection of the sword of a righteous King. Speak to me, my children, and tell me who among you is the most righteous?

FIRST MONK. I have sinned.

SECOND MONK. And I.

THIRD MONK. Father, we have all sinned.

THE ABBOT. I, too, have sinned. All that are men have sinned. How soon we exchange the wisdom of children for the folly of men! O wise children, busy with your toys while we are busy with our sins! I see clearly now. I shall find a sinless

King among these little boys. Speak to me, boys, and tell me who is most innocent among you?

THE BOYS (*with one voice*). Giolla na Naomh.

THE ABBOT. The little lad that waits upon all! Ye are right. The last shall be first. Giolla na Naomh, will you be King over this nation?

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I am too young, Father, I am too weak.

THE ABBOT. Come hither to me, child. (*The child goes over to him.*) O fosterling that I have nourished, if I ask this thing of you, will you not do it?

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I will be obedient to you, Father.

THE ABBOT. Will you turn your face into the battle?

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I will do the duty of a King.

THE ABBOT. Little one, it may be that your death will come of it.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. Welcome is death if it be appointed to me.

THE ABBOT. Did I not say that the young seek death? They are spendthrift

of all that we hoard jealously; they pursue all that we shun. The terrible, beautiful voice has spoken to this child. O herald death, you shall be answered! I will not grudge you my fosterling.

THE KING. Abbot, I will fight my own battles: no child shall die for me!

THE ABBOT. You have given me your sword, and I give it to this child. God has spoken through the voice of His ancient herald, the terrible, beautiful voice that comes out of the heart of battles.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. Let me do this little thing, King. I will guard your banner well. I will bring you back your sword after the battle. I am only your little gilly, who watches while the tired King sleeps. I will sleep to-night while you shall watch.

THE KING. My pity, my three pities!

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. We slept last night while you were marching through the dark country. Poor King, your marchings have been long. My march will be very short.

THE ABBOT. Let this gentle asking prevail with you, King. I say to you that God has spoken.

THE KING. I do not understand your God.

THE ABBOT. Who understands Him? He demands not understanding, but obedience. This child is obedient, and because he is obedient, God will do mighty things through him. King, you must yield to this.

THE KING. I yield, I yield! Woe is me that I did not fall in yonder onset!

THE ABBOT. Let this child be stripped that the raiment of a King may be put about him. (*The child is stripped of his clothing.*) Let a royal vest be put next the skin of the child. (*A royal vest is put upon him.*) Let a royal tunic be put about him. (*A royal tunic is put about him above the vest, and sandals upon his feet.*) Let the royal mantle be put about him. (*The King takes off the royal mantle and it is put upon the child.*) Let a royal diadem be put upon his head. (*The King takes off the royal diadem and it is put upon the child's head.*) Let him be given the shield of the King. (*The shieldbearer holds up the shield.*) A blessing on this shield! May it be firm against foes!

THE HEROES. A blessing on this shield!

The shield is put on the child's left arm.

THE ABBOT. Let him be given the spear of the King. (*The spearbearer comes forward*

and holds up the spear.) A blessing on this spear! May it be sharp against foes!

THE HEROES. A blessing on this spear!

THE ABBOT. Let him be given the sword of the King. (*The King lifts his sword and girds it round the child's waist. Giolla na Naomh draws the sword and holds it in his right hand.*) A blessing on this sword! May it be hard to smite foes!

THE HEROES. A blessing on this sword!

THE ABBOT. I call this little lad King, and I put the battle under his protection in the name of God.

THE KING (*kneeling before the boy*). I do homage to thee, O King, and I put the battle under thy protection.

THE HEROES, MONKS, BOYS, etc. (*kneeling*). We do homage to thee, O King, and we put the battle under thy protection.

GIOLLA NA NAOMH. I undertake to sustain the battle in the name of God.

THE ABBOT. Let a steed be brought him. (*A steed is brought.*) Let the banner of the King be unfurled. (*The banner is unfurled.*) Turn thy face to the battle, O King!

GIOLLA NA NAOMH (*kneeling*). Bless me, Father.

THE ABBOT. A blessing on thee, little one.

THE HEROES, etc. (*with one voice*). Take victory in battle and slaying, O King.

The little King mounts, and, with the heroes and soldiers and gillies, rides to the battle. The Abbot, the King, the Monks, and the Boys watch them.

THE ABBOT. King, I have given you the noblest jewel that was in my house. I loved yonder child.

THE KING. Priest, I have never received from my tributary kings a kinglier gift.

FIRST MONK. They have reached the place of battle.

THE ABBOT. O strong God, make strong the hand of this child. Make firm his foot. Make keen his sword. Let the purity of his heart and the humbleness of his spirit be unto him a magnifying of courage and an exaltation of mind. Ye angels that fought the ancient battles, ye veterans of God, make a battle-pen about him and fight before him with flaming swords.

THE MONKS AND BOYS. Amen, Amen.

THE ABBOT. O God, save this nation by the sword of the sinless boy.

THE KING. And O Christ, that was

crucified on the hill, bring the child safe from the perilous battle.

THE ABBOT. King, King, freedom is not purchased but with a great price. (*A trumpet speaks.*) Let the description of the battle be given us.

The First Monk and the Second Monk go upon the rampart.

FIRST MONK. The two hosts are face to face. *Another trumpet speaks.*

SECOND MONK. That is sweet! It is the trumpet of the King! *Shouts.*

FIRST MONK. The King's host raises shouts. *Other shouts.*

SECOND MONK. The enemy answers them.

FIRST MONK. The hosts advance against each other.

SECOND MONK. They fight.

FIRST MONK. Our people are yielding.

THIRD MONK. Say not so.

SECOND MONK. My grief, they are yielding. *A trumpet speaks.*

THIRD MONK. Sweet again! It is timely spoken, O trumpet of the King!

FIRST MONK. The King's banner is going into the battle!

SECOND MONK. I see the little King!

THIRD MONK. Is he going into the battle?

FIRST MONK. Yes.

THE MONKS AND BOYS (*with one voice*). Take victory in battle ~~and slaying~~, O King!

SECOND MONK. It is a good fight now.

FIRST MONK. Two seas have met on the plain.

SECOND MONK. Two raging seas!

FIRST MONK. One sea rolls back.

SECOND MONK. It is the enemy that retreats!

FIRST MONK. The little King goes through them.

SECOND MONK. He goes through them like a hawk through small birds.

FIRST MONK. Yea, like a wolf through a flock of sheep on a plain.

SECOND MONK. Like a torrent through a mountain gap.

FIRST MONK. It is a road of rout before him.

SECOND MONK. There are great uproars in the battle. It is a roaring path down which the King rides.

FIRST MONK. O golden head above the slaughter! O shining, terrible sword of the King!

SECOND MONK. The enemy flies!

FIRST MONK. They are beaten! They are beaten! It is a red road of rout! Raise shouts of exultation!

SECOND MONK. My grief!

FIRST MONK. My grief! My grief!

THE ABBOT. What is that?

FIRST MONK. The little King is down!

THE ABBOT. Has he the victory?

FIRST MONK. Yes, but he himself is down. I do not see his golden head. I do not see his shining sword. My grief! They raise his body from the plain.

THE ABBOT. Is the enemy flying?

SECOND MONK. Yes, they fly. They are pursued. They are scattered. They are scattered as a mist would be scattered. They are no longer seen on the plain.

THE ABBOT. It's thanks to God! (*Keening is heard.*) Thou hast been answered, O terrible voice! Old herald, my foster child has answered!

THIRD MONK. They bear hither a dead child.

THE KING. He said that he would sleep to-night and that I should watch.

Heroes come upon the green bearing the body of Giolla na Naomh on a bier; there

are women keening it. The bier is laid in the centre of the green.

THE KING. He has brought me back my sword. He has guarded my banner well.

THE ABBOT (*lifting the sword from the bier*). Take the sword.

THE KING. No, I will let him keep it. A King should sleep with a sword. This was a very valiant King. (*He takes the sword from the Abbot and lays it again upon the bier. He kneels.*) I do homage to thee, O dead King, O victorious child! I kiss thee, O white body, since it is thy purity that hath redeemed my people. (*He kisses the forehead of Giolla na Naomh. They commence to keen again.*)

THE ABBOT. Do not keen this child, for he hath purchased freedom for his people. Let shouts of exultation be raised and let a canticle be sung in praise of God.

The body is borne into the monastery with a Te Deum.

THE SCENE CLOSES.

THE MASTER

CHARACTERS

CIARAN, *the Master*

PUPILS:

IOLLANN BEAG

ART

BREASAL

MAINE

RONAN

CEALLACH

DAIRE, *the King*

MESSENGER

THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

THE MASTER

A little cloister in a woodland. The subdued sunlight of a forest place comes through the arches. On the left, one arch gives a longer vista where the forest opens and the sun shines upon a far hill. In the centre of the cloister two or three steps lead to an inner place, as it were a little chapel or cell..

Art, Breasal, and Maine are busy with a game of jackstones about the steps. They play silently.

Ronan enters from the left.

RONAN. Where is the Master?

ART. He has not left his cell yet.

RONAN. He is late. Who is with him, Art?

ART. I was with him till a while ago. When he had finished his thanksgiving he told me he had one other little prayer to say which he could not leave over. He said it was for a soul that was in danger. I left him on his knees and came out into the sunshine.

MAINE. Aye, you knew that Breasal and I were here with the jackstones.

BREASAL. I served his Mass yesterday, and he stayed praying so long after it that I fell asleep. I did not stir till he laid his hand upon my shoulder. Then I started up and said I, "Is that you, little mother?" He laughed and said he, "No, Breasal, it's no one so good as your mother."

RONAN. He is merry and gentle this while back, although he prays and fasts longer than he used to. Little Iollann says he tells him the merriest stories.

BREASAL.. He is fond of little Iollann.

MAINE. Aye; when Iollann is late, or when he is inattentive, the Master pretends not to notice it.

BREASAL. Well, Iollann is only a little lad.

MAINE. He is more like a little maid, with his fair cheek that reddens when the Master speaks to him.

ART. Faith, you wouldn't call him a little maid when you'd see him strip to swim a river.

RONAN. Or when you'd see him spring up to meet the ball in a hurley match.

MAINE. He has, certainly, many accomplishments.

BREASAL. He has a high, manly heart.

MAINE. He has a beautiful white body, and, therefore, you all love him; aye, the Master and all. We have no woman here and so we make love to our little Iollann.

RONAN (*laughing*). Why, I thrashed him ere-yesterday for putting magories down my neck!

MAINE. Men sometimes thrash their women, Ronan. It is one of the ways of loving.

ART. Maine, you have been listening to some satirist making satires. There was once a Maine that was called Maine Honey-mouth. You will be called Maine Bitter-Tongue.

MAINE. Well, I've won this game of jackstones. Will you play another?

CEALLACH (*enters hastily*). Lads, do you know what I have seen?

ART. What is it, Ceallach?

CEALLACH. A host of horsemen riding through the dark of the wood. A grim host, with spears.

MAINE. The King goes hunting.

CEALLACH. My grief for the noble deer that the King hunts!

BREASAL. What deer is that?

CEALLACH. Our Master, Ciaran.

RONAN. I heard one of the captains say that the cell was to be surrounded.

ART. But why does the King come against Ciaran?

CEALLACH. It is the Druids that have incited him. They say that Ciaran is overturning the ancient law of the people.

MAINE. The King has ordered him to leave the country.

BREASAL. Aye, there was a King's Messenger here the other day who spoke long to the Master.

ART. It is since then that the Master has been praying so long every day.

RONAN. Is he afraid that the King will kill him?

ART. No, it is for a soul that is in danger that he prays. Is it the King's soul that is in danger?

MAINE. Hush, the Master is coming.

CIARAN (*comes out from the inner place; the pupils rise*). Are all here?

BREASAL. Iollann Beag has not come yet.

CIARAN. Not yet?

CEALLACH. Master, the King's horsemen are in the wood.

CIARAN. I hope no evil has chanced to little Iollann.

MAINE. What evil could chance to him?

CEALLACH. Master, the King is seeking you in the wood.

CIARAN. Does he not know where my cell is?

BREASAL. The King has been stirred up against you, Master, rise and fly before the horsemen surround the cell.

CIARAN. No, if the King seeks me he will find me here. . . . I wish little Iollann were come. (*The voice of Iollann Beag is heard singing. All listen.*) That is his voice.

ART. He always comes singing.

MAINE. Aye, he sings profane songs in the very church porch.

RONAN. Which is as bad as if one were to play with jackstones on the church steps.

CIARAN. I am glad little Iollann has come safe.

Iollann Beag comes into the cloister singing.

IOLLANN BEAG (*sings*).

> We watch the wee ladybird fly far away,
> With an óró and an iero and an úmbó éró.

ART. Hush, Iollann. You are in God's place.

IOLLANN BEAG. Does God not like music? Why then did he make the finches and the chafers?

MAINE. Your song is profane.

IOLLANN BEAG. I didn't know.

CIARAN. Nay, Maine, no song is profane unless there be profanity in the heart. But why do you come so late, Iollann Beag?

IOLLANN BEAG. There was a high oak tree that I had never climbed. I went up to its top, and swung myself to the top of the next tree. I saw the tops of all the trees like the green waves of the sea.

CIARAN. Little truant!

IOLLANN BEAG. I am sorry, Master.

CIARAN. Nay, I am not vext with you. But you must not climb tall trees again at lesson time. We have been waiting for you. Let us begin our lesson, lads.

He sits down.

CEALLACH. Dear Master, I ask you to fly

from this place ere the King's horsemen close you in.

CIARAN. My boy, you must not tempt me. He is a sorry champion who forsakes his place of battle. This is my place of battle. You would not have me do a coward thing?

ART. But the King has many horsemen. It is not cowardly for one to fly before a host.

CIARAN. Has not the high God captains and legions? What are the King's horsemen to the heavenly riders?

CEALLACH. O my dear Master!—

RONAN. Let be, Ceallach. You cannot move him.

CIARAN. Of what were we to speak to-day? *They have sat down around him.*

ART. You said you would speak of the friends of Our Lord.

CIARAN. Aye, I would speak of friendship and kindly fellowship. Is it not a sad thing that every good fellowship is broken up? No league that is made among men has more than its while, its little, little while. Even that little league of twelve in Galilee was broken full soon. The shepherd was struck and the sheep of the flock scattered. The

hardest thing Our dear Lord had to bear was the scattering of His friends.

IOLLANN BEAG. Were none faithful to Him?

CIARAN. One man only and a few women.

IOLLANN BEAG. Who was the man?

CEALLACH. I know! It was John, the disciple that He loved.

CIARAN. Aye, John of the Bosom they call him, for he was Iosa's bosom friend. Can you tell me the names of any others of His friends?

ART. There was James, his brother.

RONAN. There was Lazarus, for whom He wept.

BREASAL. There was Mary, the poor woman that loved Him.

MAINE. There was her sister Martha, who busied herself to make Him comfortable; and the other Mary.

CEALLACH. Mary and Martha; but that other Mary is only a name.

CIARAN. Nay, she was the mother of the sons of Zebedee. She stands for all lowly, hidden women, all the nameless women of the world who are just the mothers of their children. And so we name her one of the

three great Marys, with poor Mary that sinned, and with Mary of the Sorrows, the greatest of the Marys. What other friends can you tell me of?

IOLLANN BEAG. There was John the Baptist, His little playmate.

CIARAN. That is well said. Those two Johns were good comrades to Iosa.

RONAN. There was Thomas.

CIARAN. Poor, doubting Thomas. I am glad you did not leave him out.

MAINE. There was Judas who betrayed Him.

ART. There was Peter who —

IOLLANN BEAG. Aye, good Peter of the Sword!

CIARAN. Nay, Iollann, it is Paul that carries a sword.

IOLLANN BEAG. Peter should have a sword, too. I will not have him cheated of his sword! It was a good blow he struck!

BREASAL. Yet the Lord rebuked him for it.

IOLLANN BEAG. The Lord did wrong to rebuke him. He was always down on Peter.

CIARAN. Peter was fiery, and the Lord was very gentle.

Iollann Beag. But when He wanted a rock to build His church on He had to go to Peter. No John of the Bosom then, but the old swordsman. Paul must yield his sword to Peter. I do not like that Paul.

Ciaran. Paul said many hard things and many dark things. When you understand him, Iollann, you will like him.

Maine. Let him not arrogate a sword merely because his head was cut off, and Iollann will tolerate him.

Ciaran. Who has brought me a poem to-day? You were to bring me poems of Christ's friends.

Breasal. I have made a Song for Mary Magdalene. Shall I say it to you?

Ciaran. Do, Breasal.

Breasal (*chants*).

O woman of the gleaming hair
(Wild hair that won men's gaze to thee),
Weary thou turnest from the common stare,
For the *shuiler* Christ is calling thee.

O woman, of the snowy side,
Many a lover hath lain with thee,
Yet left thee sad at the morning tide;
But thy lover Christ shall comfort thee.

O woman with the wild thing's heart,
  Old sin hath set a snare for thee;
In the forest ways forspent thou art,
  But the hunter Christ shall pity thee.

O woman spendthrift of thyself,
  Spendthrift of all the love in thee,
Sold unto sin for little pelf,
  The captain Christ shall ransom thee.

O woman that no lover's kiss
  (Tho' many a kiss was given thee)
Could slake thy love, is it not for this
  The hero Christ shall die for thee?

CIARAN That is a good song, Breasal. What you have said is true, that love is a very great thing. I do not think faith will be denied to him that loves. . . . Iollann was to make me a song to-day, too.

IOLLANN BEAG. I have made only a little rann. I couldn't think of rhymes for a big song.

CIARNN. What do you call your rann?

IOLLANN BEAG. It is the Rann of the Little Playmate. It is a rann that John the Baptist made when he was on the way to Iosa's house one day.

CIARAN. Sing it to us, Iollann.

IOLLANN (*sings*) :

Young Iosa plays with me every day
  (*With an óró and an iero*)
Tig and Pookeen and Hide-in-the-Hay
  (*With an óró and an iero.*)

We race in the river with otters gray,
  We climb the tall trees where red squirrels play,
We watch the wee lady-bird fly far away,
  (*With an óró and an iero and an imbó éro*).

A knocking is heard.

CIARAN. Run and open the postern, Iollann.

CEALLACH. Master, this may be the King's people.

CIARAN. If it be, Iollann will let them in. *Iollann Beag goes to the door.*

CEALLACH. Why have good men such pride?

A King's Messenger appears upon the threshold. Iollann Beag holds the curtain of the door while the Messenger speaks.

THE MESSENGER. Who in this house is Ciaran?

CIARAN. I am Ciaran.

The Messenger. I bring you greeting from the King.

Ciaran. Take back to him my greeting.

The Messenger. The King has come to make the hunting of this wood.

Ciaran. It is the King's privilege to hunt the woods of the cantred.

The Messenger. Not far from here is a green glade of the forest in which the King with his nobles and good men, his gillies and his runners, has sat down to meat.

Ciaran. May it be a merry sitting for them.

The Messenger. It has seemed to the King an unroyal thing to taste of the cheer of this greenwood while he is at enmity with you; for he has remembered the old saying that friendship is more welcome at meat than ale or music. Therefore, he has sent me to say to you that he has put all enmity out of his heart, and that in token thereof he invites you to share his forest feast, such as it is, you and your pupils.

Ciaran. The King is kind. I would like well to come to him, but my rule forbids me to leave this house.

The Messenger. The King will take

badly any refusal. It is not usual to refuse a King's invitation.

CIARAN. When I came to this place, after journeying many long roads of land and sea, I said to myself: "I will abide here henceforth, this shall be the sod of my death." And I made a vow to live in this little cloister alone, or with a few pupils, I who had been restless and a wanderer, and a seeker after difficult things; the King will not grudge me the loneliness of my cloister.

THE MESSENGER. I will say all this to the King. These lads will come with me?

CIARAN. Will ye go to the King's feast, lads?

BREASAL. May we go, Master.

CIARAN. I will not gainsay you.

MAINE. It will be a great thing to sit at the King's table.

CEALLACH. Master, it may turn aside the King's displeasure for your not going if we go in your name. We may, perchance, bring the King here, and peace will be bound between you.

CIARAN. May God be near you in the places to which you go.

CEALLACH. I am loath to leave you alone, Master.

CIARAN. Little Iollann will stay with me. Will you not, little Iollann.

Iollann Beag looks yearningly towards the Messenger and the others as if he would fain go; then he turns to Ciaran.

IOLLANN BEAG. I will.

CIARAN (*caressing him*). That is my good little lad.

ART. We will bring you back some of the King's mead, Iollann.

IOLLANN BEAG. Bring me some of his apples and his hazel-nuts.

RONAN. We will, and, maybe, a roast capon, or a piece of venison.

They all go out laughing. Ceallach turns back in the door.

CEALLACH. Good-bye, Master.

CIARAN. May you go safe, lad. (*To Iollann*). You are my whole school now, Iollann.

IOLLANN (*sitting down at his knee*). Do you think the King will come here?

CIARAN. Yes, I think he will come.

IOLLANN. I would like to see him. Is he a great, tall man?

CIARAN. I have not seen him for a long time; not since he and I were lads.

IOLLANN. Were you friends?

CIARAN. We were fostered together.

IOLLANN. Is he a wicked King?

CIARAN. No; he has ruled this country well. His people love him. They have gone into many perilous places with him, and he has never failed them.

IOLLANN. Why then does he hate you? Why do Ceallach and the others fear that he may do you harm?

CIARAN. For twenty years Daire and I have stood over against each other. When we were at school we were rivals for the first place. I was first in all manly games; Daire was first in learning. Everyone said "Ciaran will be a great warrior and Daire will be a great poet or a great teacher." And yet it has not been so. I was nearly as good as he in learning, and he was nearly as good as I in manly feats. I said that I would be his master in all things, and he said that he would be my master. And we strove one against the other.

IOLLANN BEAG. Why did you want to be his master?

CIARAN. I do not know. I thought that I should be happy if I were first and Daire

only second. But Daire was always first. I sought out difficult things to do that I might become a better man than he: I went into far countries and won renown among strange peoples, but very little wealth and no happiness; I sailed into seas that no man before me had sailed into, and saw islands that only God and the angels had seen before me; I learned outland tongues and read the books of many peoples and their old lore; and when I came back to my own country I found that Daire was its king, and that all men loved him. Me they had forgotten.

IOLLANN BEAG. Were you sad when you came home and found that you were forgotten?

CIARAN. No, I was glad. I said, "This is a hard thing that I have found to do, to live lonely and unbeloved among my own kin. Daire has not done anything as hard as this." In one of the cities that I had sailed to I had heard of the true, illustrious God, and of men who had gone out from warm and pleasant houses, and from the kindly faces of neighbours to live in desert places, where God walked alone and terrible; and I said that I would do that hard thing,

though I would fain have stayed in my father's house. And so I came into this wilderness, where I have lived for seven years. For a few years I was alone; then pupils began to come to me. By-and-bye the druids gave out word that I was teaching new things and breaking established custom; and the King has forbade my teaching, and I have not desisted, and so he and I stand opposed as of old.

IOLLANN BEAG. You will win this time, little Master.

CIARAN. I think so; I hope so, dear. (*Aside.*) I would I could say "I know so." This seems to me the hardest thing I have tried to do. Can a soldier fight for a cause of which he is not sure? Can a teacher die for a thing he does not believe? . . . Forgive me, Lord! It is my weakness that cries out. I believe, I believe; help my unbelief. (*To Iollann Beag.*) Why do you think I shall win this time, Iollann,—I who have always lost?

IOLLANN BEAG. Because God's great angels will fight for you. Will they not?

CIARAN. Yes, I think they will. All that old chivalry stands harnessed in Heaven.

IOLLANN BEAG. Will they not come if you call them?

CIARAN. Yes, they will come. (*Aside.*) Is it a true thing I tell this child or do I lie to him? Will they come at my call? Will they come at my call? My spirit reaches out and finds Heaven empty. The great halls stand horseless and riderless. I have called to you, O riders, and I have not heard the thunder of your coming. The multitudinous, many-voiced sea and the green, quiet earth have each its children, but where are the sons of Heaven? Where in all this temple of the world, this dim and wondrous temple, does its God lurk?

IOLLANN BEAG. And would they come if I were to call them—old Peter, and the Baptist John, and Michael and his riders?

CIARAN. We are taught that if one calls them with faith they will come.

IOLLANN BEAG. Could I see them and speak to them?

CIARAN. If it were necessary for any dear purpose of God's, as to save a soul that were in peril, we are taught that they would come in bodily presence, and that one could see them and speak to them.

IOLLANN BEAG. If the soul of any dear friend of mine be ever in peril I will call upon them. I will say, "Baptist John, Baptist John, attend him. Good Peter of the Sword, strike valiantly. Young Michael, stand near with all the heroes of Heaven!"

CIARAN (*aside*). If the soul of any dear friend of his were in peril! The peril is near! The peril is near!

A knock at the postern; Iollann Beag looks towards Ciaran.

CIARAN. Run, Iollann, and see who knocks. (*Iollann Beag goes out.*) I have looked back over the journey of my life as a man at evening might look back from a hill on the roads he had travelled since morning. I have seen with a great clearness as if I had left this green, dim wood and climbed to the top of that far hill I have seen from me for seven years now, yet never climbed. And I see that all my wayfaring has been in vain. A man may not escape from that which is in himself. A man shall not find his quest unless he kill the dearest thing he has. I thought that I was sacrificing everything, but I have not sacrificed the old pride of my heart. I chose self-abnegation,

not out of humility, but out of pride: and God, that terrible hidden God, has punished me by withholding from me His most precious gift of faith. Faith comes to the humble only. . . . Nay, Lord, I believe: this is but a temptation. Thou, too, wast tempted. Thou, too, wast forsaken. O valiant Christ, give me Thy strength! My need is great. *Iollann Beag returns.*

IOLLANN BEAG. There is a warrior at the door, Master, that asks a shelter. He says he has lost his way in the wood.

CIARAN. Bid him to come in Iollann. (*Iollann Beag goes to the door again.*) I, too, have lost my way. I am like one that has trodden intricate forest paths that have crossed and recrossed and never led him to any homestead; or like a mariner that has voyaged on a shoreless sea yearning for a glimpse of green earth, yet never descrying it. If I could find some little place to rest, if I could but lie still at last after so much wayfaring, after such clamour of loud-voiced winds, methinks that would be to find God; for is not God quiet, is not God peace? But always I go on with a cry as of baying winds or of vociferous hounds

about me. . . . They say the King hunts me to-day: but the King is not so terrible a hunter as the desires and the doubts of a man's heart. The King I can meet unafraid, but who is not afraid of himself? (*Daire enters, wrapped in a long mantle, and stands a little within the threshold: Iollann Beag behind him. Ciaran looks fixedly at him; then speaks.*) You have hunted well to-day, O Daire!

DAIRE. I am famed as a hunter.

CIARAN. When I was a young man I said, "I will strive with the great untamed elements, with the ancient, illimitable sea and the anarchic winds;" you, in the manner of Kings, have warred with timid, furtive creatures, and it has taught you only cruelty and craft.

DAIRE. What has your warfare taught you? I do not find you changed, Ciaran. Your old pride but speaks a new language. . . . I am, as you remind me, only a King; but I have been a good King. Have you been a good teacher?

CIARAN. My pupils must answer.

DAIRE. Where are your pupils?

CIARAN. True; they are not here.

Daire. They are at an ale-feast in my tent. . . . (*Coming nearer to Ciaran.*) I have not come to taunt you, Ciaran. Nor should you taunt me. You seem to me to have spent your life pursuing shadows that fled before you; yea, pursuing ghosts over wide spaces and through the devious places of the world: and I pity you for the noble manhood you have wasted. I seem to you to have spent my life busy with the little, vulgar tasks and the little, vulgar pleasures of a King: and you pity me because I have not adventured, because I have not been tried, because I have not suffered as you have. It should be sufficient triumph for each of us that each pities the other.

Ciaran. You speak gently, Daire; and you speak wisely. You were always wise. And yet, methinks, you are wrong. There is a deeper antagonism between you and me than you are aware of. It is not merely that the little things about you, the little, foolish, mean, discordant things of a man's life, have satisfied you, and that I have been discontent, seeking things remote and holy and perilous,—

Daire. Ghosts, ghosts!

CIARAN. Nay, they alone are real; or, rather, it alone is real. For though its names be many, its substance is one. One man will call it happiness, another will call it beauty, a third will call it holiness, a fourth will call it rest. I have sought it under all its names.

DAIRE. What is it that you have sought?

CIARAN. I have sought truth.

DAIRE. And have you found truth? (*Ciaran bows his head in dejection.*) Ciaran, was it worth your while to give up all goodly life to follow that mocking phantom? I do not say that a man should not renounce ease. I have not loved ease. But I have loved power, and victory, and life, and men, and women, and the gracious sun. He who renounces these things to follow a phantom across a world has given his all for nothing.

CIARAN. Is not the mere quest often worth while, even if the thing quested be never found?

DAIRE. And so you have not found your quest?

CIARAN. You lay subtle traps for me in your speeches, Daire. It was your way at school when we disputed.

DAIRE. Kings must be subtle. It is by craft we rule. . . . Ciaran, for the shadow you have pursued I offer you a substance; in place of vain journeying I invite you to rest. . . . If you make your peace with me you shall be the second man in my kingdom.

CIARAN (*in scorn and wrath*). The second man!

DAIRE. There speaks your old self, Ciaran. I did not mean to wound you. I am the King, chosen by the people to rule and lead. I could not, even if I would, place you above me; but I will place you at my right hand.

CIARAN. You would bribe me with this petty honour?

DAIRE. No. I would gain you for the service of your people. What other service should a man take upon him?

CIARAN. I told you that you did not understand the difference between you and me. May one not serve the people by bearing testimony in their midst to a true thing even as by feeding them with bread?

DAIRE. Again you prate of truth. Are you fond enough to think that what has not

imposed even upon your pupils will impose upon me?

CIARAN. My pupils believe. You must not wrong them, Daire.

DAIRE. Are you sure of them?

CIARAN. Yes, I am sure. (*Aside.*) Yet sometimes I thought that that gibing Maine did not believe. It may be —

DAIRE. Where are your pupils? Why are they not here to stand by you in your bitter need?

CIARAN. You enticed them from me by guile.

DAIRE. I invited them; they came. You could not keep them, Ciaran. Think you my young men would have left me, in similar case? Their bodies would have been my bulwark against a host.

CIARAN. You hint unspeakable things.

DAIRE. I do but remind you that you have to-day no disciples; (*smiling*) except, perhaps, this little lad. Come, I will win him from you with an apple.

CIARAN. You shall not tempt him!

DAIRE (*laughing*). Ciaran, you stand confessed: you have no faith in your disciples; methinks you have no faith in your religion.

CIARAN. You are cruel, Daire. You were not so cruel when we were lads.

DAIRE. You have come into my country preaching to my people new things, incredible things, things you dare not believe yourself. I will not have this lie preached to men. If your religion be true, you must give me a sign of its truth.

CIARAN. It is true, it is true!

DAIRE. Give me a sign. Nay, show me that you yourself believe. Call upon your God to reveal Himself. I do not trust these skulking gods.

CIARAN. Who am I to ask that great Mystery to unveil Its face? Who are you that a miracle should be wrought for you?

DAIRE. This is not an answer. So priests ever defend their mysteries. I will not be put off as one would put off a child that asks questions. Lo, here I bare my sword against God; lo, here I lift up my shield. Let one of his great captains come down to answer the challenge!

CIARAN. This the bragging of a fool.

DAIRE. Nor does that answer me. Ciaran, you are in my power. My young men surround this house. Yours are at an ale-feast.

CIARAN. O wise and far-seeing King! You have planned all well.

DAIRE. There is a watcher at every door of your house. There a tracker on every path of the forest. The wild boar crouches in his lair for fear of the men that fill this wood. Three rings of champions ring round the tent in which your pupils feast. Your God had need to show Himself a God!

CIARAN. Nay, slay me, Daire. I will bear testimony with my life.

DAIRE. What will that prove? Men die for false things, for ridiculous things, for evil things. What vile cause has not its heroes? Though you were to die here with joy and laughter you would not prove your cause a true one. Ciaran, let God send down an angel to stand between you and me.

CIARAN. Do you think that to save my poor life Omnipotence will display Itself?

DAIRE. Who talks of your life? It is your soul that is at stake, and mine, and this little boy's, and the souls of all this nation, born and unborn.

CIARAN (*aside*). He speaks true.

DAIRE. Nay, I will put you to the proof. (*To Iollann.*) Come hither, child. (*Iollann Beag approaches.*) He is daintily fashioned, Ciaran, this last little pupil of yours. I swear to you that he shall die unless your God sends down an angel to rescue him. Kneel boy. (*Iollann Beag kneels.*) Speak now, if God has ears to hear.

He raises his sword.

CIARAN (*aside*). I dare not speak. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

IOLLANN BEAG. Fear not, little Master, I remember the word you taught me. . . . Young Michael, stand near me!

The figure of a mighty Warrior, winged, and clothed in light, seems to stand beside the boy. Ciaran bends on one knee.

DAIRE. Who art thou, O Soldier?

MICHAEL. I am he that waiteth at the portal. I am he that hasteneth. I am he that rideth before the squadron. I am he that holdeth a shield over the retreat of man's host when Satan cometh in war. I am he that turneth and smiteth. I am he that is Captain of the Host of God.

Daire bends slowly on one knee.

CIARAN. The Seraphim and the Cherubim stand horsed. I hear the thunder of their coming. . . O Splendour!

He falls forward, dead.

CURTAIN

IOSAGAN

CHARACTERS

IOSAGAN

OLD MATTHIAS

THE PRIEST

BOYS:--DARAGH, PADRAIC, COILIN, CUIMIN, FEICHIN, EOGHAN

Daragh and Padraic are a little older than the other boys

PLACE—A sea-strand beside a village in Iar-Connacht

TIME—The present

IOSAGAN, loving diminutive of Íosa; "Jesukin" ("Ísuccán") is the name of the Child Jesus in the exquisite hymn attributed to St. Ita, b. 470, d. 580, A.D.—*Author's Note.*

IOSAGAN

SCENE I

A sea-strand beside a village in Iar-Connacht. A house on the right-hand side. The sound of a bell comes east, very clearly. The door of the house is opened. An aged man, old Matthias, comes out on the door-flag and stands for a spell looking down the road. He sits then on a chair that is outside the door, his two hands gripping a stick, his head bent, and he listening attentively to the sound of the bell. The bell stops ringing. Daragh, Padraic and Coilin come up from the sea and they putting on their share of clothes after bathing.

DARAGH (*stretching his finger towards the sea*). The flowers are white in the fisherman's garden.

PADRAIC. They are, *muise.*

COILIN. Where are they?

DARAGH. See them out on the sea.

COILIN. Those are not white flowers. Those are white horses.

DARAGH. They're like white flowers.

COILIN. No; Old Matthias says those are the white horses that go galloping across the sea from the Other Country.

PADRAIC. I heard Iosagan saying they were flowers.

COILIN. What way would flowers grow on the sea?

PADRAIC. And what way would horses travel on the sea?

COILIN. Easy, if they were fairy horses would be in them.

PADRAIC. And wouldn't flowers grow on the sea as easy, if they were fairy flowers would be in them? Isn't it often you saw the water-lilies on Loch Ellery? And couldn't they grow on the sea as well as on the lake?

COILIN. I don't know if they could.

PADRAIC. They could, *muise*.

DARAGH. The sea was fine to-day, lad.

COILIN. It was, but it was devilish cold.

PADRAIC. Why wouldn't you be cold when you'd only go into your knees?

COILIN. By my word, I was afraid the waves would knock me down if I'd go in any further. They were terrible big.

DARAGH. That's what I like, lad. Do you mind yon terrible big one that came over our heads?

PADRAIC. Aye, and Coilin screaming out he was drowned.

COILIN. It went down my throat; it did that, and it nearly smothered me.

PADRAIC. Sure, you had your mouth open, and you shouting. It would be a queer story if it didn't go down your throat.

COILIN, Yon one gave me enough. I kept out of their way after that.

DARAGH. Have the other lads on them yet?

PADRAIC. Aye. Here they are.

COILIN. Look at Feichin's hair!

Feichin, Eoghan and Cuimin come up from the sea and they drying their hair.

CUIMIN. What'll we play to-day?

COILIN. "Blind Man's Buff!"

PADRAIC. Ara, shut up, yourself and your "Blind Man's Buff."

COILIN. "High Gates," then!

PADRAIC. No. We're tired of those "High Gates."

DARAGH. "Hide and Seek!"

FEICHIN. Away!

EOGHAN. "Fox and Chickens!"

COILIN. No. We'll play "*Lúrabóg Lárabóg*."

PADRAIC I'll make a *lúrabóg* of you!

COILIN. You do be always at me, Padraic. (*Padraic catches hold of him.*) Listen to me, will you?

CUIMIN. Ara, listen to him, Padraic.

DARAGH. Listen to him.

Padraic lets him go.

COILIN. Speak yourself, Padraic, if you won't give leave to anyone else.

PADRAIC. Let's jump!

EOGHAN. Let's jump! Let's jump!

DARAGH. I'll bet I'll beat you, Padraic.

PADRAIC. At jumping, is it?

DARAGH. Aye.

PADRAIC. Didn't I beat you the day before yesterday at the School Rock?

DARAGH. I'll bet you won't beat me to-day. Will you try?

PADRAIC. I won't. My feet are sore. (*The other boys begin laughing; Padraic speaks with a shamed face.*) I'd rather play ball.

EOGHAN. Ball! Ball!

DARAGH. Has anybody a ball?

CUIMIN. And if they had, itself, where would we play?

PADRAIC. Against Old Matthias's gable-end. There's no nicer place to be found.

COILIN. Who has the ball?

CUIMIN. My soul, I haven't it.

DARAGH. No, nor I.

PADRAIC. You yourself, Coilin, had it on Friday.

COILIN. By my word, didn't the master grab it where I was hopping it in the school at Catechism?

FEICHIN. True for you, lad.

CUIMIN. My soul, but I thought he'd give you the rod that time.

COILIN. He would, too, only he was expecting the priest to come in.

DARAGH. It's the ball he wanted. He'll have a game with the peelers to-day after Mass.

PADRAIC. My soul, but he will, and it's he can beat the peelers, too.

DARAGH. He can't beat the sergeant. The sergeant's the best man of them all. He beat Hoskins and the red man together last Sunday.

FEICHIN. Ara, stop! Did he beat them?

DARAGH. He did, *muise.* The red man was raging, and the master and the peelers all laughing at him.

PADRAIC. I bet the master will beat the sergeant.

DARAGH. I'll bet he won't.

PADRAIC. Do ye hear him?

DARAGH. I'll bet the sergeant can beat any man in this country.

PADRAIC. Ara, how do you know whether he can or not?

DARAGH. I know well he can. Don't I be always watching them?

PADRAIC. You don't know!

DARAGH. I do know! It's I that know it!

They threaten each other. A quarrel arises among the boys, a share of them saying, "The sergeant's the best!" *and others,* "The master's best!" *Old Matthias gets up to listen to them. He comes forward, twisted and bent in his body, and barely able to drag his feet along. He speaks to them quietly, laying his hand on Daragh's head.*

MATTHIAS. O! O! O! My shame ye are!

PADRAIC. This fellow says the master can't beat the sergeant playing ball.

DARAGH. By my word, wouldn't the sergeant beat anybody at all in this country, Matthias?

MATTHIAS. Never mind the sergeant. Look at that lonesome wild goose that's making on us over Loch Ellery! Look!

All the boys look up.

PADRAIC. I see it, by my soul!

DARAGH. Where's she coming from, Matthias?

MATTHIAS. From the Eastern World. I would say she has travelled a thousand miles since she left her nest in the lands to the north.

COILIN. The poor thing. And where will she drop?

MATTHIAS. To Aran she'll go, it's a chance. See her now out over the sea. My love you are, lonesome wild goose!

COILIN. Tell us a story, Matthias.

He sits on a stone by the strand-edge, and the boys gather round him.

MATTHIAS. What story shall I tell?

FEICHIN. "The Adventures of the Grey Horse!"

CUIMIN. "The Hen-Harrier and the Wren!"

PADRAIC. "The Two-Headed Giant!"

COILIN. "The Adventures of the Piper in the Snail's Castle!"

EOGHAN. Aye, by my soul, "The Adventures of the Piper in the Snail's Castle!"

THE BOYS (*with one voice*). "The Adventures of the Piper in the Snail's Castle!"

MATTHIAS. I'll do that. "There was a Snail in it long ago, and it's long since it was. If we'd been there that time, we wouldn't be here now; and if we were, itself, we'd have a new story or an old story, and that's better than to be without e'er a story at all. The Castle this Snail lived in was the finest that man's eye ever saw. It was greater entirely, and it was a thousand times richer than Meave's Castle in Rath Cruachan, or than the Castle of the High-King of Ireland itself in Tara of the Kings. This Snail made love to a Spider —"

COILIN. No, Matthias, wasn't it to a Granny's Needle he made love?

MATTHIAS. My soul, but you're right. What's coming on me?

PADRAIC. Go on, Matthias.

MATTHIAS. "This Nettle-Worm was very comely entirely — "

FEICHIN. What's the Nettle-Worm, Matthias?

MATTHIAS. Why, the Nettle-Worm he made love to.

CUIMIN. But I thought it was to a Granny's Needle he made love.

MATTHIAS. Was it? The story's going from me. "This Piper was in love with the daughter of the King of Connacht — "

EOGHAN. But you didn't mention the Piper yet, Matthias!

MATTHIAS. Didn't I! "The Piper . . . " yes, by my soul, the Piper — I'm losing my memory. Look here, neighbours, we won't meddle with the story to-day. Let's have a song.

COILIN. "Hi diddle dum!"

MATTHIAS. Are ye satisfied?

THE BOYS. We are.

MATTHIAS. I'll do that. (*He sings the following rhyme*):

"Hi diddle dum, the cat and his
mother,
That went to Galway riding a drake."

THE BOYS. And hi diddle dum!

MATTHIAS.

"Hi diddle dum, the rain came pelting,
And drenched to the skin the cat and his mother."

THE BOYS. And hi diddle dum!

MATTHIAS.

"Hi diddle dum, 'twas like in the deluge
The cat and his mother would both be drownded."

THE BOYS. And hi diddle dum!

MATTHIAS.

"Hi diddle dum, my jewel the drake was,
That carried his burden —"

COILIN. Swimming —

MATTHIAS. Good man, Coilin.

"That carried his burden swimming to Galway."

THE BOYS. And hi diddle dum!

Old Matthias shakes his head wearily; he speaks in a sad voice.

MATTHIAS. My songs are going from me, neighbours. I'm like an old fiddle that's lost all its strings.

CUIMIN. Haven't you the "*Báidín*" always, Matthias?

MATTHIAS. I have, my soul; I have it as long as I'm living. I won't lose the

"*Báidín*" till I'm stretched in the clay. Shall we have it?

THE BOYS. Aye.

MATTHIAS. Are ye ready to go rowing?

THE BOYS. We are!

They order themselves as they would be rowing. Old Matthias sings these verses.

MATTHIAS.

"I will hang a sail, and I will go west."

THE BOYS. *Oró, mo churaichín, O!*

MATTHIAS.

"And till St. John's Day I will not rest."

THE BOYS. *Oró, mo churaichín, O!*
Oró, mo churaichín. O!
'S óró, mo bháidín!

MATTHIAS.

"Isn't it fine, my little boat, sailing on the bay."

THE BOYS. *Oró, mo churaichin, O!*

MATTHIAS. "The oars pulling —"

He stops suddenly, and puts his hand to his head.

PADRAIC. What's on you, Matthias?

EOGHAN. Are you sick, Matthias?

MATTHIAS. Something that came on my head. It's nothing. What's this I was saying?

COILIN. You were saying the "*Báidín*," Matthias, but don't mind if you don't feel well. Are you sick?

MATTHIAS. Sick? By my word, I'm not sick. What would make me sick? We'll start again:
"Isn't it fine, my little boat, sailing on the bay."

THE BOYS. *Oró, mo churaichín, O!*

MATTHIAS. "The oars pulling strongly—" (*He stops again.*) Neighbours, the "*Báidín*" itself is gone from me. (*They remain silent for a spell, the old man sitting and his head bent on his breast, and the boys looking on him sorrowfully. The old man speaks with a start.*) Are those the people coming home from Mass?

CUIMIN. No. They won't be free for a half hour yet.

COILIN. Why don't you go to Mass, Matthias?

The old man rises up and puts his hand to his head again. He speaks angrily at first, and after that softly.

MATTHIAS. Why don't I go? . . . I'm not good enough. By my word, God

wouldn't hear me. . . . What's this I'm saying? . . . (*He laughs.*) And I have lost the "*Báidín*," do ye say? Amn't I the pitiful object without my "*Báidín!*"

He hobbles slowly across the road. Coilin rises and puts his shoulder under the old man's hand to support him. The boys begin playing "jackstones" quietly. Old Matthias sits on the chair again, and Coilin returns. Daragh speaks in a low voice.

DARAGH. There's something on Old Matthias to-day. He never forgot the "*Báidín*" before.

CUIMIN. I heard my father saying to my mother, the other night, that it's not long he has to live.

COILIN. Do you think is he very old?

PADRAIC. Why did you put that question on him about the Mass? Don't you know he hasn't been seen at Mass in the memory of the people?

DARAGH. I heard Old Cuimin Enda saying to my father that he himself saw Old Matthias at Mass when he was a youth.

COILIN. Do you know why he doesn't go to Mass now?

PADRAIC (*in a whisper*). It's said he doesn't believe there's a God.

CUIMIN. I heard Father Sean Eamonn saying it's the way he did some terrible sin at the start of his life, and when the priest wouldn't give him absolution in confession there came a raging anger on him, and he swore an oath he wouldn't touch priest or chapel for ever again.

DARAGH. That's not how I heard it. One night when I was in bed the old people were talking and whispering by the fireside, and I heard Maire of the Bridge saying to the other old women that it's the way Matthias sold his soul to some Great Man he met once on the top of Cnoc-a'-Daimh, and that this Man wouldn't allow him to go to Mass.

PADRAIC. Do you think was it the devil he saw?

DARAGH. I don't know. A "Great Man," said Maire of the Bridge.

CUIMIN. I wouldn't believe a word of it. Sure, if Matthias sold his soul to the devil it must be he's a wicked person.

PADRAIC. He's not a wicked person, *muise*. Don't you mind the day Iosagan

said that his father told him Matthias would be among the saints on the Day of the Mountain?

CUIMIN. I mind it well.

COILIN. Where's Iosagan from us to-day?

DARAGH. He never comes when there does be a grown person watching us.

CUIMIN. Wasn't he here a week ago to-day when old Matthias was watching us?

DARAGH. Was he?

CUIMIN. He was.

PADRAIC. Aye, and a fortnight to-day, as well.

DARAGH. There's a chance he'll come to-day, then. *Cuimin rises and looks east.*

CUIMIN. O, see, he's coming.

Iosagan enters—a little, brown-haired boy, a white coat on him, and he without shoes or cap like the other boys. The boys welcome him.

THE BOYS. God save you, Iosagan!

IOSAGAN. God and Mary save you!

He sits among them, a hand of his about Daragh's neck; the boys begin playing again, gently, without noise or quarrelling. Iosagan joins in the game. Matthias rises with a start on the coming of Iosagan, and stands

gazing at him. After they have played for a spell he comes towards them, and then stands again and calls over to Coilin.

MATTHIAS. Coilin!

COILIN. What do you want?

MATTHIAS. Come here to me. (*Coilin rises and goes to him.*) Who is that boy I see among you this fortnight back—he, yonder, with the brown head on him—but take care it's not red he is; I don't know is it black or is it fair he is, the way the sun is burning on him? Do you see him—him that has his arm about Daragh's neck?

COILIN. That's Iosagan.

MATTHIAS. Iosagan?

COILIN. That's the name he gives himself.

MATTHIAS. Who are his people?

COILIN. I don't know, but he says his father's a king.

MATTHIAS. Where does he live?

COILIN. He never told us that, but he says his house isn't far away.

MATTHIAS. Does he be among you often?

COILIN. He does, when we do be amusing ourselves like this. But he goes from us when grown people come near. He will

go from us now as soon as the people begin coming from Mass.

The boys rise and go, in ones and twos, when they have finished the game.

COILIN. O! They are going jumping.

He runs out after the others. Iosagan and Daragh rise and go. Matthias comes forward and calls Iosagan.

MATTHIAS. Iosagan! (*The Child turns back and comes towards him at a run.*) Come here and sit on my knee for a little while, Iosagan. (*The Child links his hand in the old man's hand, and they cross the road together. Matthias sits on his chair and draws Iosagan to him.*) Where do you live, Iosagan?

IOSAGAN. Not far from this my house is. Why don't you come to see me?

MATTHIAS. I would be afraid in a royal house. They tell me that your father's a king.

IOSAGAN. He is High-King of the World. But there's no call for you to be afraid of Him. He's full of pity and love.

MATTHIAS. I fear I didn't keep His law.

IOSAGAN. Ask forgiveness of Him. I and my Mother will make intercession for you.

MATTHIAS. It's a pity I didn't see You

before this, Iosagan. Where were You from me?

IOSAGAN. I was here always. I do be travelling the roads and walking the hills and ploughing the waves. I do be among the people when they gather into My house. I do be among the children they do leave behind them playing on the street.

MATTHIAS. I was too shy, or too proud, to go into Your house, Iosagan: among the children, it was, I found You.

IOSAGAN. There isn't any place or time the children do be making fun to themselves that I'm not with them. Times they see Me; other times they don't see Me.

MATTHIAS. I never saw You till lately.

IOSAGAN. All the grown people do be blind.

MATTHIAS. And it has been granted me to see You, Iosagan.

IOSAGAN. My Father gave Me leave to show Myself to you because you loved His little children. (*The voices are heard of the people returning from Mass.*) I must go now from you.

MATTHIAS. Let me kiss the hem of Your coat.

IOSAGAN. Kiss it.

He kisses the hem of His coat.

MATTHIAS. Shall I see You again, Iosagan?

IOSAGAN. You will.

MATTHIAS. When?

IOSAGAN. To-night.

Iosagan goes. The old man stands on the door-flag looking after Him.

MATTHIAS. I will see Him to-night.

The people pass along the road, returning from Mass.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Old Matthias's room. It is very dark. The old man lying on his bed. Some one knocks outside the door. Matthias speaks in a weak voice.

MATTHIAS. Come in. (*The Priest enters. He sits down beside the bed and hears the old man's confession. When they have finished, Matthias speaks.*) Who told you I was wanting you, Father? I was praying God that you'd come, but I hadn't a messenger to send for you.

PRIEST. But, sure, you did send a messenger for me?

MATTHIAS. No.

PRIEST. You didn't? But a little boy came and knocked at my door, and he said you were wanting my help.

The old man straightens himself back in the bed, and his eyes flash.

MATTHIAS. What sort of a little boy was he, Father?

PRIEST. A mannerly little boy, with a white coat on him.

MATTHIAS. Did you take notice if there was a shadow of light about his head?

PRIEST. I did, and it put great wonder on me.

The door opens. Iosagan stands on the threshold, and He with His two arms stretched out towards Matthias; a miraculous light about His face and head.

MATTHIAS. Iosagan! You're good, Iosagan. You didn't fail me, love. I was too proud to go into Your house, but at the last it was granted me to see You. "I was here always," says He. "I do be travelling the roads and walking the hills and ploughing the waves. I do be among the people when they gather into My house. I do be among the children they do leave behind playing on the street." Among the children, it was, I found You, Iosagan. "Shall I see You again?" "You will," says He. "You'll see Me to-night." *Sé do bheatha, a Iosagáin*!

He falls back on the bed, and he dead. The Priest goes softly to him and closes his eyes.

CURTAIN

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

THE SINGER

The following is the version of a passage in this play, which was with the Author's manuscript :

COLM. Is it to die like rats you'd have us because the the word is not given ?

CUIMIN. Our plans are not finished. Our orders are not here.

COLM. Our plans will never be finished. Our orders may never be here.

CUIMIN. We've no one to lead us.

COLM. Didn't you elect me your captain ?

CUIMIN. We did, but not to bid us rise out when the whole country is quiet. We were to get the word from the men that are over the people. They'll speak when the time comes. (*The door opens again and Feichin comes in with two or three others.*) Am I speaking lie or truth, men ? Colm here wants us to rise out before the word comes. I say we must wait for the word. What do do you say, Feichin, you that's got a wiser head than these young fellows ?

FEICHIN. God forgive me if I'm wrong, but I say we should wait for our orders.

CUIMIN. What do you say, Diarmaid ?

DIARMAID. I like you, Colm, for the way you spoke so well and bravely ; but I'm slow to give my voice to

send out the boys of th's mountain—our poor little handful—to stand with their poor little pikes against the big guns of the Gall. If we had news that they were rising in the other countrysides; but we've got no news.

COLM. Master, you haven't spoken yet. I'm afraid to ask you to speak.

MAOILSHEACHLAINN. Cuimin is right when he says that we must not rise out until we get the word; but what do you say, neighbours, if the man that'll give the word is under the roof of this house?

DIARMAID. What do you mean?

MAOILSHEACHLAINN (*going to the door of the room and throwing it open*). Let you rise out, MacDara, and reveal yourself to the men that are waiting your word!

FEICHIN. Has MacDara come home?

MacDara comes out of the room, Maire ni Fhiannachta and Sighle stand behind him in the doorway.

DIARMAID (*starting up*). That is the man that stood among the people in the fair of Uachtar Ard! (*He goes up to MacDara and kisses his hand.*) I could not get near you yesterday, MacDara, the crowds were so great. What was on me that I didn't know you? Sure I ought to have known that sad, proud head. Maire, men and women yet unborn will bless the pains of your first childing.

MAIRE (*comes forward and takes her son's hand and kisses it*). Soft hand that played at my breast, strong hand that will fall heavy on the Gall, brave hand that will break the yoke! Men of the mountain, my son, MacDara, is the Singer that has quickened the dead years and the young blood. Let the horsemen that sleep in Aileach rise up to-day and follow him into the war!

They come forward, one by one, and kiss his hand. Colm and Sighle last.

COLM. The Gall have marched from Clifden,

MacDara. I wanted to rise out to-day, but these old men think it is not yet time.

CUIMIN. We were waiting for the word.

MACDARA. And must I speak the word? Old men, you have left me no choice. I had hoped that more would not be asked of me than to sow the secret word of hope, and that the toil of the reaping would be for others. But I see that one does not serve

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTE

THE SINGER was written in the late Autumn of 1915. Joseph Plunkett was profoundly impressed when he read it. "If Pearse were dead," he said, "this would cause a sensation." Mr. Pearse rather deprecated his view that the play was entirely a personal revelation.

THE KING was first produced as an open air play upon the banks of the river which runs through the Hermitage, Rathfarnham, by the students of St. Enda's College. In reference to its subsequent production at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 17th May, 1913, Mr. Pearse wrote in *An Macaomh*, Vol. II., No. 2, 1913: "The play we decided to produce along with THE POST OFFICE, was my morality *An Rí*." We had enacted it during the previous summer with much pageantry of horses and marchings, at a place in our grounds where an old castellated bridge, not unlike an entrance to a monastery, is thrown across a stream. Since that performance I had added some speeches with the object of slightly deepening tbe characterization." William Pearse played the Abbot's part.

THE MASTER was produced Whitsuntide, 1915, at the Irish Theatre, Hardwicke Street, Dublin, with William Pearse as Ciaran. No Irish MS. is extant. *Iosagán*, the dramatization of the author's story of the same name, was first acted in Cullenswood House, Rathmines, Dublin, in February, 1910, by St. Enda students. Mr. Pearse writes in *An Macaomh*, Vol. I., No. 2, 1909: "In *Iosagán* I have religiously followed

the phraseology of the children and old men in *Iar-Connacht* from whom I have learned the Irish I speak. I have put no word, no speech into the mouths of my little boys which the real little boys of the parish I have in mind—boys whom I know as well as I know my pupils in *Sgoil Eanna*—would not use in the same circumstances. I have given their daily conversation, anglicism, vulgarisms and all ; if I gave anything else my picture would be a false one. *Iosagán* is not a play for ordinary theatres or for ordinary players. It requires a certain atmosphere and a certain attitude of mind on the part of the actors. It has in fact been written for performance in a particular place and by particular players. I know that in that place and by those players it will be treated with the reverence due to a prayer."

D. R.